

	Total Quantity in kilograms.	Per Head of Population (grams).
SWITZERLAND.		
Opium and preparations and extracts	704	0.17
Morphine	234	0.058
Heroin	174	0.043
Cocaine	229	0.057
SWEDEN.		
Opium	1,600	0.27
Morphine	120	0.02
Cocaine	150	0.025
DENMARK.		
Opium	467	0.16
Morphine	98	0.035
Cocaine	48	0.016

is more than twice as great per head of population in Switzerland as in Sweden, and more than three times as great as in Denmark. These three countries can be properly compared because all are small countries, all were neutral in the war, and all have a relatively high standard of health; the annual mortality rate in Switzerland is 14 per 1000, in Sweden 13.29, and in Denmark 13.4.

Dr. F. Norman White, who occupies an official position on the International Health Committee of the League, was present at this sitting of the Opium Commission, and amplified Dr. Carrière's report. He said that the investigators who had carried out the task in Switzerland were impressed by the great difficulty of undertaking any similar inquiry in a larger country. The difficult question was to decide as to the limits of legitimate use. If it was said that all opium prescribed by a doctor was legitimate, it must be remembered that, at any rate in some countries, these drugs might be abused by the medical profession. Moreover, even among practitioners in countries where there was a high standard of medical qualification, great diversity of opinion existed as to the use of these drugs. Some doctors used them too much, other perhaps not enough. One of the members of the Commission asked to what extent Dr. White thought that the results arrived at for European countries might be safely applied to oriental countries like India, where racial characteristics, habits of life, and incidence of disease were all different. Dr. White replied that in western countries it might be assumed that the use of a drug was legitimate if it was prescribed by a doctor, but in such a country as India it was necessary to define, not merely legitimate use, but also the doctor. He had known native practitioners in India who used opium very skilfully in the treatment of disease, but according to western standards their use of the drug would be regarded as illegitimate. He agreed that there was much greater tolerance for narcotic drugs amongst the Indian native population than amongst Europeans. The representative of India on the Commission, Mr. Campbell, stated that the average annual consumption of opium in all forms among the population of 240,000,000 of British India was between 26 and 27 grains a head. If cocaine were taken as equivalent to morphine, and both morphine and cocaine as equivalent to ten times the quantity of opium, the consumption in Denmark would represent about 10½ grains of opium a head, or about 40 per cent. of the consumption in India.

Discussion took place on the wisdom of encouraging the use of synthetic drugs which, while possessing the same medicinal value as morphine or cocaine, were less likely to form the drug habit. Dr. White believed that the new synthetic drugs led to nothing corresponding to the cocaine habit. There were instances of perversity, of course, but these needed no special legislation any more than the fact that now and again an alcoholic subject became maniacal on eau-de-Cologne was a reason for special legislation against that spirit. He regarded eucaïne, from the habit-forming point of view, as not one-hundredth part as dangerous as cocaine; it did not give rise to those so-called pleasurable sensations which were the root of the mischief. The German representative said that in his country research was being directed to the replacement of habit-forming drugs by others, approximately equal in medicinal value, which were not injurious. It was understood that the Health Commission of the League of Nations would get in touch with the German Government on this matter. Dr. White demurred to a suggestion from Mrs. Hamilton Wright that legislation should be introduced to prevent or limit the medical use of drugs. He did not think that medical initiative should be bound in

that way. There were certain cases in which he, were he a practising physician, would be very sorry not to have opium at his command, and he believed that many doctors did not use it enough. He was pressed by some members of the Commission to suggest a figure for consumption per head of population which might represent the utmost limit of legitimate use, so that if it were exceeded in any country suspicion would be aroused. In reply he pointed out the difficulty of expressing the potency of one drug in terms of another, and also the fact that a relatively high figure for a given country—as in the present case of Switzerland compared with Denmark—might simply mean that the statistics had been collected more carefully. A figure which should serve as a danger signal could only be arrived at as the result of an inquiry extending over several years and concerned with a number of countries.

It was reported by Britain, America, Germany, Holland, and Japan that information could and would be obtained in those countries as to the manufacture and sale of cocaine and the purposes for which the drug was produced, and the Secretariat of the League was instructed to stimulate such inquiries and correlate the results.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE:

THE STORY OF HIS SKULL, HIS WIG, AND HIS COFFIN PLATE.

BY

REV. CANON F. J. MEYRICK,
ST. PETER MANCROFT VICARAGE, NORWICH.

A PATHETIC irony seems to follow the great author of the *Religio Medici*, *Urn Burial*, and *Vulgar Errors*, even beyond the grave.

"To be knav'd out of our graves, to have our sen's made drinking bowls and our bones turned into pipes . . . are tragically abominations escaped by burning burials."

The writer of these words suffered at least a part of a "tragical abomination," for his skull, though never "made into a drinking bowl," was almost certainly "knav'd" out of his grave. In the chancel of the great Church of St. Peter Mancroft, Norwich, is a tablet which tells us that—

"Near to the foot of this pillar lies Sir Thomas Browne Knight and Doctor in Physick, the author of *Religio Medici* and other learned Bookes, who practis'd Physick in ye City 46 years and died Oct 19 1682 in ye 77th year of his Age," etc., etc.

The story of the "knaving" is, and must always be, wrapt in some mystery. This much is known. In 1840 the aged incumbent, the Rev. John Bowman, was mourning the loss of his wife. A grave was being prepared for her in the chancel of the church. A local antiquary, whose "acquisitive complex" was abnormally developed even for an antiquary, took from the coffin of Sir Thomas Browne the coffin plate, which was broken when forced from the lead coffin. Though he strenuously denied the theft and declared the coffin plate was in the possession of the sexton, yet in 1893, fifty-three years later, the broken plate was found in his desk among his acquired treasures and rightly returned by his executors to the church from whence he had borrowed it.

The coffin plate, which is now restored, is carefully preserved by the church authorities as near as is convenient to its original resting place. It is in the form of an heraldic escutcheon measuring 7 in. by 6 in., and broken into two nearly equal halves. On it are engraved remarkable words, of which Sir Thomas's eldest son, Edward Browne, was the author. Edward, like his father, was a ripe scholar and a great traveller. He was the author of an extraordinarily interesting book of travels in divers parts of Europe, "printed for Benj. Tooke, at the Sign of the Ship in St. Paul's Church-yard MDCLXXXV." He had the reputation of being the best bred man of Charles II's Court, was President of the College of Physicians, and physician to St. Bartholomew's Hospital. The words read as follows:

"Hoc loculo indormiens corporis spagyrici pulvere plumbum in aurum convertit" ["Sleeping in this grave, by the dust of his alchemic body he changes the lead to gold"].

The acquisitive antiquary who claimed to have looked into the coffin declared that the lead of the coffin had actually decomposed and changed to carbonate which crumbled at the touch. However, as we have seen, little reliance can be set upon the witness of this man. This same antiquary



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declared in 1847 that seven years before, looking into the coffin, he saw not only the skull but also the hair of Sir Thomas Browne, and he described the hair as "of a fine auburn colour."

Meanwhile, in 1845, a skull had been presented to the hospital as that of Sir Thomas Browne. Unfortunately there is no record of the gift in the hospital books. Since 1845 the skull and some hair have been preserved in the hospital museum, of late years in a silver casket, presented by the late Professor Osler, perhaps the greatest authority in his day on Sir Thomas and his writings.

Many questions have been asked about the skull. No one knows who stole it or by what means it reached a certain Dr. Lubbock, who is said to be the donor of the relic to the hospital. It has been suggested, without a shadow of evidence, that the sexton stole the skull, hawked it about Norwich, and finally sold it to Dr. Lubbock. Now the sexton in 1840, when the grave was "knave'd," was a most worthy and loyal servant of the church. His son followed him, and his grandson, a great lover of Sir Thomas, is serving the church to-day. The sexton of 1840 was a man of considerable means, for he could afford to present the church that he served with such fidelity with a beautiful oak door.

Did the antiquary, who was the only man who claimed to have seen the skull and who most certainly "borrowed" the coffin plate, also "borrow" with or without the churchwardens' consent, the skull? It looks like it. Yet in dealing with relics, it is wise to walk warily. Did the antiquary really look into the grave? The story of the thick head of hair is not very convincing. For is it possible that a man who lived to 77 and who for forty years was responsible for a great practice should have died with a head covered with profuse auburn hair? There are many possibilities. It is possible that Sir Thomas was buried in his wig. It is possible, on the other hand, that the antiquary, satisfied with the coffin plate, never looked into the coffin at all. It is even possible, though unlikely, that the faithful old sexton with dry humour palmed off another skull (in 1840 the crypts were choked with them) on to the greedy antiquary.

Clearly we must walk warily. Orthodoxy and dogma are dangerous in matters relating to relics. The great philosopher's own words (*Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, Chapter V) warn us of the danger of credulity:

"A third cause of common Errors, is the Credulity of men, that is, an easie assent to what is obtruded; or a believing at first ear, what is delivered by others. This is a weakness in the understanding, without examination assenting unto things, which from their Names and Causes do carry persuasion; whereby men often swallow falsities for truths, dubiosities for certainties, sensibilities for possibilities, and things impossible, as possibilities themselves. Which, though a weakness of the Intellect, and most discoverable in vulgar heads; yet hath it sometimes fallen upon wiser brains, and great advancers of Truth."

And this cause of error, the philosopher tells us, is supinety or neglect of inquiry, "rather believing than going to see; or doubting with ease and gratis, than believing with difficulty and purchase."

Let us therefore "go to see." In the museum of the hospital there is the skull. At first sight, with little or no knowledge of craniology, we would say: This cannot possibly be the skull of Sir Thomas Browne—that low, receding, depressed forehead is never that behind which the *Religio Medici* was conceived.

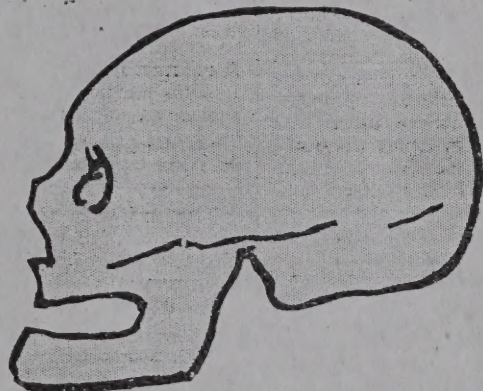
We look elsewhere for evidence of the shape of the philosopher's head. There are, fortunately, no less than four contemporary portraits. There is one in the treasury of St. Peter Mancroft—a half-length, three-quarter face. The portrait was presented to the church by Dr. Edward Howman, who owned and occupied Sir Thomas Browne's house after the philosopher's death. A second portrait is in the Bodleian Library—also a half-length and three-quarter face, and was probably painted in 1671 or 1672, just after Sir Thomas had been knighted. A third portrait is in the Royal College of Physicians, London, and represents Sir Thomas as somewhat older than in the other two pictures.

In all three pictures, though there are differences in cast of countenance and in details of dress, you see a noble face of a man of over sixty. There is a touch of melancholy in each face, and each picture represents a man who, so far from having the straitened forehead of the fool, rejoiced in the noble, intellectual forehead of a scholar. This is what one would expect, unless one had been to the museum and seen the skull.

There is a fourth and less well known portrait. It is at Devonshire House, Piccadilly, and some years ago the Duke of Devonshire kindly allowed it to be photographed and published in Norwich. It is probably the work of Van Somer, a Dutch artist who came to England in 1606. It represents the Browne family when Thomas was a few years old. Thomas Browne, mercer of London, and Anne his wife, are with their four children, Anne, Jane, Mary, and the future Sir Thomas. Even at this early age Thomas has a high forehead, the child's eyes being actually nearer the point (if a child's chin has a point!) of the chin than the top of the forehead.

Another possibility has been suggested. Dr. Beveland, a great collector of all that concerns Sir Thomas, sends me a copy of a MS. in the British Museum. It reads as follows and throws a new possibility on the skull's authenticity:

"The late Dr. Jeffery gave notice to Sir Thomas Browne's nearest relative that his vault wanted Reparation, who sent him word it might be filled up, which when the Dr. knew, desired that he might be interr'd thereon, who shortly after Dying His corpse was deposited in the Vault and afterwards filled up with earth and over the Doctor on a stone is this Ins: Johannis Jeffery, S.T.P., etc. etc. 1720 anno aet. suae 73."



Rough tracing showing the skull with its low and depressed forehead.

From this we learn that soon after the burial of Sir Thomas Browne in 1682 his vault was filled up with soil, and that in 1720 the grave was opened, and over the coffin of Sir Thomas Browne was laid the body of Dr. Jeffery. This John Jeffery was vicar, or, as he was then called, minister, of St. Peter Mancroft, for forty-two years, from 1678 to 1720. He was appointed Archdeacon of Norwich in 1694. Sir Thomas Browne, who lived hardly a stone's throw from this church, was for four years not only his greatest parishioner but his greatest friend. It has been suggested that when in 1840 the gravediggers disturbed the "filled-up" vault of Sir Thomas they must

have first come upon the skeleton of John Jeffery, and that therefore the low, depressed skull is that of the archdeacon and not the philosopher. A picture of the archdeacon disposes of this possibility. The vicar was even more noble-browed than his great parishioner!

At first sight the conclusion drawn from the skull and the portraits seems almost irresistible. For could such a skull boast a brow so nobly shaped? Yet we know that artists are necessarily idealists. Portraits were in quite early times types rather than likenesses. Even when they became likenesses, something typical remained. In Caroline days may it not have been the fashion to give eminent men the high forehead that we see in Van Dyck's Charles I in the Wallace Collection, or in his Henrietta Maria in the National Portrait Gallery?

On the whole we believe, then, the tradition is true that the antiquary knew what he was doing when he rifled the grave and "knave'd" the skull, and that the governors of the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital have been guarding the great man's skull for nearly eighty years. The unbroken tradition in the sexton's family carries great weight. The Potters for four generations have all been faithful servants of the church, and the present verger, Mr. Douro Potter, is entirely convinced that the skull which the hospital authorities are returning to the church is the skull that held the brain that gave birth to the *Religio Medici*.

If a great scholar—Dr. E. Browne—wrote the Latin inscription on the coffin plate in 1682, another great scholar—Dr. Pollock, Bishop of Norwich—has in 1922 written that which is to mark the spot in the chancel of St. Peter Mancroft where the skull will lie. It is as follows:

O caput augustum, Petro custode sepulchri
Sic tibi pax; nomen vivat in urbe; vale.

